

**Political Declaration**  
– the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2009 –

**The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Institutional Abolition of Higher Education in  
Hungarian Language in Romania: the Case of the Bolyai University of Cluj**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the Chamber of Deputies,**

This year, in March we commemorate a very sad event from the point of view of all democratic forces in Romania and of the education in Hungarian language: the autocratic abolition of the Bolyai University of Cluj.

A 'detachment' of the Romanian Workers' Party, lead by Nicolae Ceaușescu, suppressed the independent higher education in Hungarian language merging it into the Babeș University of Cluj.

In this regard, I would like to remind You that the creation of the network of institutions of higher education by and for the Hungarian community in Transylvania began in 1581 with the establishment of the Jesuit Academy in Cluj, while the later milestones of this process were the years 1622 (the establishment of the Academy of Alba Iulia), 1872 (the establishment of the Franz Josef University of Cluj) and 1945 (the establishment of the Bolyai University of Cluj).

However, the normal process of development experienced by the Hungarian community's system of instruction in native language has been suddenly interrupted 50 years ago, in March.

Since the merger into the Babeș University, the number of academic fields of study in which education has been offered in the native language has decreased substantially and the ethnic Hungarian teaching staff has been gradually eliminated from the system mainly by failing to ensure the possibility of hiring young academics.

From a quantitative point of view, by 1989, higher education in Hungarian language sank to the critical level of virtual disappearance. After the regime change in 1989, the Hungarian community expressed its resolute desire to re-establish the Bolyai University. The DAHR, voicing this unanimous request, elaborated several memoranda as well as drafts of laws and governmental decrees, which have been disregarded by the legislature and the Cabinet alike, legitimizing thus a historical mistake committed by the previous totalitarian regime.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that in spite of the constitutional rights guaranteed in art. 123 of Law no. 84/1995 on education, notwithstanding various international covenants ratified by Romania and the realities in the European Union, even the smallest step that would lead to meeting this demand has not been taken thus far.

In order to support my claims, I would like to call your attention to some illuminating facts and data regarding the reestablishment of the independent higher education in Hungarian language.

Ethnic Hungarians represent 6.6% of the country's total population, while only 4.4% of the students enrolled in higher education are ethnic Hungarians; moreover, only 1.6% of all students learn in their native language. Furthermore, the ratio of publicly funded universities to the whole population in Romania is 1 to 400,000; consequently, the 1.5 million strong Hungarian minority would be entitled to at least three institutions of higher education.

I would like to make my point very clear: Hungarians in Romania demand no privileges, they only wish to have free disposal of the tax revenues collected from them as taxpayers equal to all other Romanian citizens. The fact that there is no possibility to study in one's native language especially in areas of major importance to the national economy (e.g., engineering and agricultural sciences) is equally damaging.

In what concerns European examples, we could mention that the Swedish community in Finland (300,000 strong), the Sami in Norway (80,000 strong), the Catalans in Spain (6,000,000 strong), Hungarians in Slovakia (500,000 strong), the Gagauz people in the Republic of Moldova (150,000 strong) as well as the Albanians in Macedonia (700,000 strong) have one or more universities where their youth are taught in their respective native language.

I would like to add that the report condemning the Communist regime, drafted by Vladimir Tismăneanu and his associates and presented to Parliament by President Traian Băsescu, makes reference to the question of higher education in Hungarian language, mentioning expressly the Bolyai University established through a decree signed by King Michael I on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 1945.

Bearing in mind the above arguments, I consider that in what concerns the Bolyai University there is need for historical reparation. The reestablishment of this institution would represent one of the touchstones of rule of law in Romania, in other words one of the touchstones of legal guarantees for constitutional rights.

On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abominable act committed by the totalitarian Communist regime with the purpose of **restraining access to native language education, we assert that the Hungarian community in Romania will never give up the idea of reestablishing the Bolyai University and, rather oppositely, will initiate the necessary legal procedures in order to fulfill this noble ideal.**

**Thank you for your attention.**

**József Kötő,  
Member of the House of Representatives  
(DAHR)**